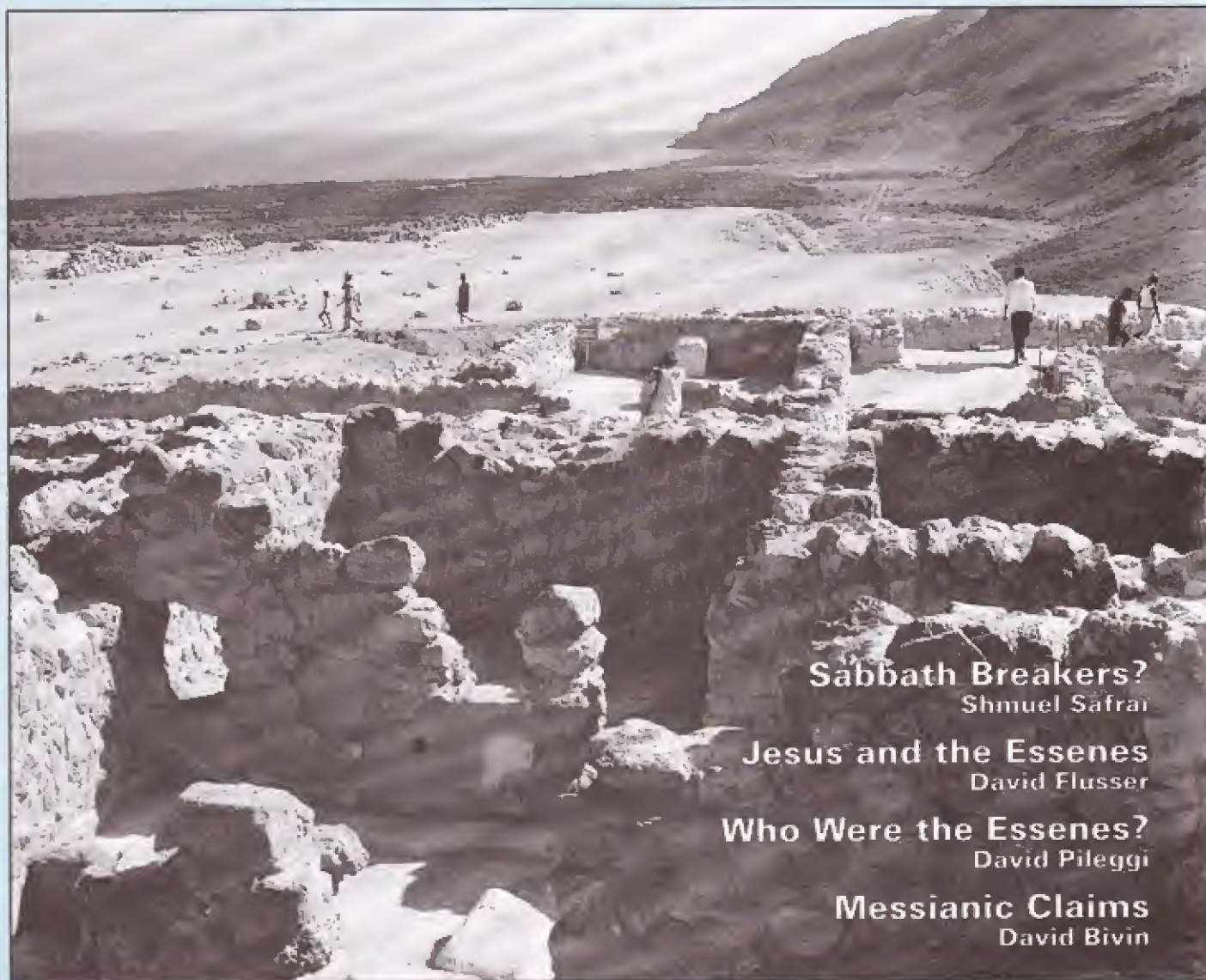


מנקודת ראות ירושלמית

# Jerusalem Perspective

July/August 1990  
Volume 3, Number 4



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**A Bimonthly Report on Research into the Words of Jesus**



*I want you to know that I am enjoying my subscription to JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE enormously. It is adding a whole new dimension to my Bible study, and I look forward to each new issue. Your research needs to reach more people.*

*— A reader in Oceanside, California, U.S.A.*

*I remember reading a quotation from Jerome, translator of the Latin Vulgate, who said there was a copy of Matthew's Gospel in Hebrew in the library in Caesarea in his day. If this was true, it seems that you may be pursuing a good goal in restoring the text of the Gospels.*

*— A reader in Pensacola, Florida, U.S.A.*

Not only did Jerome (374–420 A.D.) claim to have seen a Hebrew gospel, he said he had translated it and on several occasions he quoted from it (*On Famous Men* 2 & 3). However, Jerome did not say this was Matthew, but rather "the gospel in Hebrew letters which the Nazarenes use" (*Against Pelagius* III, 2), or "the gospel according to the Hebrews." A much earlier writer, Papias, who was a disciple of John the apostle, stated that Matthew recorded the sayings of Jesus in Hebrew and everyone translated them as best he could (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* III, 39, 16). It is unlikely that the book to which Papias refers is the canonical Gospel of Matthew. It is quite possible, however, that Papias' "Matthew" is the same as Jerome's Hebrew gospel.

The gospel according to the Hebrews definitely existed and may even have been called "Matthew" by some of its users, but it is a difficult document to pin down. Various writers in the early church quoted short passages from it, and scholars have identified over fifty such fragments. We do not know exactly when this gospel was written, but neither do we know exactly when any of the four canonical Gospels were written. Papias' testimony suggests that the Hebrew gospel was written quite early, and was likely one of the first attempts to record the events of Jesus' ministry. It may have been one of the documents referred to in the opening verses of Luke.

The gospel according to the Hebrews probably included large amounts of material which was parallel to the canonical Gospels. The church fathers who quote from it do not cite these parallels, but mention only those passages which differ from the four evangelists. Jerome quotes passages from this Hebrew gospel in the following examples, in the first of which, attributed to Jesus, he adds a comment: "A moment ago my mother, the Holy Spirit, took me up." No one should be scandalized by this, since in Hebrew spirit is in the feminine gender, while in our language [Latin] it is masculine and in Greek it is neuter. There is no gender in the god-head" (*Commentary on Isaiah*, on 40:9). "In the gospel according to the Hebrews ... among the most grievous offences is this: 'He who has grieved the spirit of his brother'" (*Commentary on Ezekiel*, on 18:7). "The Lord says to his disciples: 'Do not rejoice except when you look on your brother with love'" (*Commentary on Ephesians*, on 5:4).

The approach of quoting only the unique pas-

(continued on page 15)

## Jerusalem Perspective

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**One year:** £18 – US\$36 – CAN\$42 – NIS40 in Israel. **Two years:** £30 – US\$60 – CAN\$70 – NIS68. **Three years:** £38 – US\$75 – CAN\$88 – NIS84.

**Gift subscriptions — For first:** £15 – US\$30 – CAN\$36 – NIS34. **For each additional:** £13 – US\$25 – CAN\$30 – NIS28.

**Back Issues** — October 1987– May 1989 (monthly issues) are £1.50 – US\$3 – CAN\$3.50 – NIS3 each. When ordering 12 or more of these first 20 issues, £1 – US\$2 – CAN\$2.50 – NIS2 each. July/August 1989 and following (bimonthly issues) are £2.50 – US\$5 – CAN\$6 – NIS5.

Prices in non-Israeli currencies include airmail postage. Prices in Israeli shekels apply to delivery in Israel only. Payment may be made by money order, bank draft or personal check in any currency, but must be in the local currency of the bank on which the check is drawn. Checks should be made payable to "Jerusalem Perspective."

**Jerusalem Perspective** is created electronically on Macintosh computers and output on a Linotype Linetronic 300 at Total Graphics in Tel-Aviv. Films and plates are produced by Tafsar Agaf, Jerusalem, with printing by Ben-Zvi Press, Jerusalem.

Printed in Israel. ISSN 0792-1357

Opinions expressed in **Jerusalem Perspective** are not necessarily those held by the Editor or Publisher.

P.O. Box 31820  
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**Cover photo:**  
Ruins of ancient  
Essene building  
complex at Qumran,  
on the shore of the  
Dead Sea.  
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# Sabbath Breakers?

Jesus' observance of the commandments has been a topic of vigorous scholarly debate. However, when the synoptic Gospels are carefully examined, one sees that Jesus never violated written or oral Torahs. But did his disciples?

by Shmuel Safrai

And it came to pass on the second Sabbath between Passover and Shavuot that he was going through the grain-fields, and his disciples plucked heads of grain, rubbed them in their hands and ate them. And some of the Pharisees said, "Why do you do that which is not permitted on the Sabbath?"

And Jesus answered them and said, "Haven't you read what David did when he and his men were hungry, how he entered the house of God and took the shewbread, which only the priests are permitted to eat, and ate it and gave it to his men?"

And he said to them, "Man is master of the Sabbath." (Lk. 6:1-5)

**T**his story is also narrated in the other two synoptic Gospels (Mt. 12:1-8 and Mk. 2:23-28), but Luke's version is more complete, mentioning such details as the exact time of year when the events took place — spring, the second Sabbath in the cycle of the counting of the *omer* — and the fact that it was only some of the Pharisees who accosted Jesus.

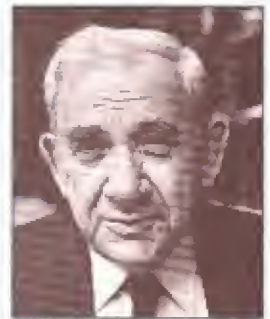
Although several of the most significant Greek manuscripts of Luke 6:1 read ἐν σαββάτῳ (*en sabbatō*, on a Sabbath), many

others have ἐν σαββάτῳ δευτεροπρώτῳ (*en sabbatō deuteroprōtō*, on the second-first Sabbath). I have chosen the latter reading because it makes better sense in this context. This also is the reading of the Byzantine text, or *Textus Receptus*, and thus the *King James Version* translates "on the second sabbath after the first."

Later copyists may have omitted *deuteroprōtō*, "second-first," because it was a strange word, and because they were not acquainted with the Jewish background of the Gospels. But I feel this reading accurately reflects the Jewish milieu in which the story is set. Note that Franz Delitzsch correctly translated *deuteroprōtō* in his Hebrew version of the New Testament ("and it came to pass on the second Sabbath of the counting of the *omer*").

## Counting the Omer

Luke's narrative clearly was composed within a society familiar with the counting of the *omer*. According to halachah, and indeed common practice until today, the counting of the *omer* was not just a time during which the Sanhedrin kept track of the fifty days between Passover and Shavuot. Rather each individual was



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expected to count those days and to know which day and which week it was within the cycle. Thus Menahot 65<sup>b</sup> interprets “And you shall count **unto you** seven full weeks from the day after the Sabbath, the day you bring the sheaf of the wave offering” (Lev. 23:15), in the following manner: “the counting is the duty of everyone.”

Reference to the time of year in the narrative suggests various other relevant facts. The new crop of barley could not be harvested or eaten before the *omer* was offered at the Temple on the 16th of Nisan, the second day of the Passover festival. One symbolic sheaf was brought to the Temple, and finding a ripe sheaf could be difficult because Passover falls just before the beginning of the barley harvest. Sometimes it was necessary to search far afield to find an *omer*, and occasionally the only barley to be found was still green, in which case the sheaf would be dried over a fire.

The barley harvest had only just begun by the second Sabbath after Passover, and there generally was a shortage of grain at this point in the season. The story is set in the Sea of Galilee region, an area that usually saw its produce ripen earlier than the rest of the country. Even so, it took some time before this new produce reached the markets. Meanwhile, people were craving the taste of grain products. The previous year's grain would have been used up, especially if that year had not been very bountiful.

There was a period of only a day or two when there were heads of grain on the ground in the fields. The poor entered the fields immediately after the harvesters left, but did not pick up every last head of grain. They could glean a larger quantity by moving on to another just-harvested field. Thus one could always find a few heads of grain in a field even after the harvesters and the poor had been there. But only for a day or two because the birds were also hungry.

### Halachic Detail

With this background information, we can deal with the major question raised in this story: did Jesus' disciples actually pluck the heads of grain on the Sabbath?

According to Matthew and Mark, the disciples plucked the heads of grain, while according to Luke they both plucked and rubbed them in their hands. The earliest version of this story seems to be that the disciples only rubbed the heads of grain but did not pluck them. This would be in keep-

ing with the custom of the time and religious ruling. Luke apparently was not familiar with the minutiae of halachic detail in this matter, and added plucking to the act of rubbing, while Mark and Matthew, who seem to have known even less halachah, deleted the rubbing and left only the act of plucking.

Plucking heads of grain is considered harvesting, which is one of the thirty-nine classes of labor (*melachot*, מלאכות, *a-VOT me-la-KOT*) prohibited on the Sabbath (Mishnah, Shabbat 7:8). This prohibition is based upon an explicit statement in the Torah (Ex. 34:21), and neither Jesus nor his disciples would have committed such a transgression. There were differences of opinion among the sages of that time on points such as certain laws of ritual purity, and some religious authorities did not accept all aspects of these laws. However, there was complete uniformity of opinion regarding working on the Sabbath.

There was also a general consensus that rubbing heads of grain on the Sabbath was a forbidden activity, although the Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 128<sup>a</sup>, states that “one may rub with his fingertips and eat.” Some sages were more lenient, such as Rabbi Yehudah who forbade rubbing heads of grain with a utensil, but allowed that with one's hands a person could “rub and eat.”

A number of texts support the claim that Jesus' disciples did not pluck heads of grain but only rubbed them (cf. Shlomo Pines, *The Jewish Christians of the Early Centuries of Christianity According to a New Source*, 1969, p. 45; “Gospel Quotations and Cognate Topics in Abd al-Jabbar's *Tathbit*,” *Jerusalem Studies of Arabic and Islam* 9 [1987], 258-259). Two unrelated Arabic texts, the anti-Christian polemic of Abd al-Jabbar and the Arabic *Diatessaron*, as well as the Persian *Diatessaron* and Ephraem's Syriac commentary on the *Diatessaron*, all mention that the disciples rubbed heads of grain. They do not, however, say anything at all regarding plucking. The implication drawn from these texts is that the original version of this story only mentioned rubbing.

### Rules of Gleaning

There is another way of showing that plucking was not part of the original version. Jesus and his disciples were clearly in a privately owned field, and had no right to pull off heads of standing grain. True, the Bible states: “If you enter your neighbor's

grainfield, you may pluck heads of grain with your hands, but you must not put a sickle to his standing grain" (Deut. 23:25). This might suggest that one was allowed to pluck heads of grain from a privately owned field. Tannaic interpretation, however, understood this verse as referring to a hired laborer working for the owner of the field. Thus, one who labored in a field could pick some of the heads of grain which belonged to his employer. Someone just passing through did not have that privilege (Mishnah, Bava Metsi'a 7:2-5).

It is inconceivable that a wayfarer could pick grain or grapes at will. This was especially true in the Land of Israel where individual agricultural plots were rather small. Such indiscriminate picking would have ruined a farmer. It is therefore highly unlikely that Jesus and his disciples would have entered standing grainfields and pulled off heads of grain. Had they done so, no one would have thought to accuse them of violating the Sabbath; they would have accused them of being thieves!

However, the halachah allowed a person to enter a field after the harvest had been completed and after the poor had collected the gleanings allotted them by the Torah: "When is everyone permitted to collect gleanings? When the last of the poor have left" (Mishnah, Peah 8:1).

## Conclusion

We now can reconstruct the events recorded in Luke 6:1-5 as follows: On the second Sabbath after Passover, Jesus and his disciples passed through a barley field which had already been harvested and after the poor had finished gleaning. There were still a few heads of grain on the ground, and the disciples picked them up and rubbed them in their hands.

That act was considered inappropriate on the Sabbath only according to those who were more stringent in their religious observance. This explains why Luke's text states that only certain Pharisees objected and not the Pharisees in general, since there were some who considered the act permissible.

Jesus, like the Hasidim, advocated rulings which would make life more enjoyable for people. The disciples were not impoverished or about to die of hunger, yet Jesus supported their Sabbath eating of grain with a parallel example: even though there was no danger that David's men would otherwise starve, David allowed them to eat

## Ears of Corn?

The *King James Version* of Luke 6 speaks of the disciples plucking ears of corn, which to an American suggests yellow sweet corn rather than grain which the British translators had in mind. In fact, corn is a generic term used to refer to the most important cereal crop of a region, be it maize, wheat or oats. In the Land of Israel, the main field crops in ancient times were wheat and barley. Barley is the Hebrew *סֵעֶרָה* (*se'-o-RAH*). It is mentioned thirty-four times in the Hebrew Scriptures, thirteen times together with wheat.

The Torah commands that at harvest time a sheaf of the first grain harvested is to be brought to the priest to be waved before the LORD as an offering. This was done on the second day of the Passover festival (Lev. 23:10-11). The Torah does not specify which grain is meant, but the commandment has always been understood to refer to barley which ripens in Israel at the time of Passover.

Barley flour was less expensive than wheat flour, being coarser and less tasty, and was used commonly in the bread baked by the poor. Because barley can be grown on steeply sloping land or in regions where rainfall is insufficient for wheat production, its distribution was quite widespread in ancient times.

Barley is so inferior to wheat that in ancient sources it is often mentioned as animal feed (I Kings 4:28; Mishnah, Sotah 2:1). Even so, because it ripens a month or more before wheat, it was what was brought to the Temple on Passover as a thanks offering.

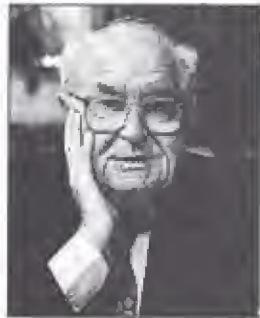
what they were not permitted to eat. Those Pharisees who criticized Jesus were more stringent in their interpretation of Sabbath regulations, while Jesus was in favor of letting the disciples enjoy the Sabbath more freely.

All three Gospels conclude the story with Jesus saying, "Man is master of the Sabbath." This statement also is in keeping with Hasidic sentiments. In *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah*, a work which reflects Hasidic thought, we find the following: "Usually it is said that the Torah is to be put first ... but I would say that the people [literally, Israel] come first" (chapter 15, p. 71). A similar idea is found in the teaching of Rabbi Shim'on ben Menasyah, a second-century sage whose teaching shows Hasidic influence: "You shall keep the Sabbath" [Exodus 31:14]... The Sabbath has been given to you, not you to the Sabbath" (Mekilta, Ki Tissa 1; to Exodus 31:14). Note the similarity of this to the statement found in the Markan parallel: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mk. 2:27).

Jesus was not necessarily referring to this rabbinic saying, which possibly predates the sage in whose name it is recorded, but he certainly took advantage of the opportunity to express his opinion on the matter and to reiterate the view that the Sabbath was intended for man's enjoyment. JP

# Jesus and the Essenes

Prof. Flusser argued in our previous issue that the phrase “sons of light” in Jesus’ parable of the dishonest steward was an ironic reference to the Essenes. In the conclusion to this article he examines the application of the parable and suggests that it is a warning to avoid sectarian separatism.



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by David Flusser

**W**hoever wanted to follow Jesus had to live in brotherly love with the outside world and not withdraw from society. This included economic dealings with outsiders. The Essenes, however, practiced extreme separatism. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the parable of the dishonest steward (Lk. 16:1–9) Jesus taught his disciples not to behave like the “sons of light,” the Essenes.

Jesus enlarged the scope of the parable’s main theme in its application, found in Luke 16:10–12. I believe Jesus had in mind a specific case of economic contact with non-believers, namely deposits which had been entrusted to his followers. In antiquity, it was a common practice to store goods for safekeeping with someone. In such a situation, or in the case of loans or collateral deposits, there was a great temptation for the holder to behave dishonestly when the deposit had to be returned. Jesus admonished the members of his movement to be trustworthy in handling such deposits.

Deposits of this sort are mentioned in the famous Letter of Pliny the Younger to the Emperor Trajan in 110 C.E., which includes an oath Christians used to say on Sundays (X 96:7). They swore, among other things, that they would not betray the trust of another and that they would return a deposit when asked for it. The earliest Christian apologist, Aristides of Athens, said in the second-century C.E. that Christians were forbidden to appropriate a deposit for themselves (*Apology* 15:4). Such a trespass could easily happen in the commercial situation of antiquity, and it is quite possible that in his explanation of the parable Jesus also addressed cases where his followers

would be tempted to be untrustworthy with what belonged to a non-believer.

## Unrighteous Mammon

The suggestion that Jesus had in mind the deposit of a non-believer held in trust by one of Jesus’ followers fits well with the meaning of Luke 16:10–12. The passage forms a chain of three arguments:

The man who can be trusted in a small matter can be trusted also in a great one, and the man who is dishonest in a small matter is also dishonest in a great one.

If, then, you have not proved trustworthy with the unrighteous mammon, who will trust you with that which is true?

And if you have proved untrustworthy with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own? (Lk. 16:10–12)

These three arguments are built in a parallel manner. The first expresses a general principle, and the “small matter” corresponds to the “unrighteous mammon” in the second argument and to “what belongs to another” in the third.

As we have seen in part one of this article, “the unrighteous mammon” in Essene terminology means all wealth owned by those who do not belong to the sect. The parallel between “the unrighteous mammon” in Luke 16:11 and the phrase “what belongs to another” in the following verse, confirms the assumption that the mammon of unrighteousness in Luke 16:9 and 11 refers to the wealth of non-believers. Jesus was opposed to the Essenes’ attitude of non-involvement and asked his followers to be involved and to be trustworthy with what belongs to others.

## Spiritual Wealth

According to the parallel arguments in Luke 16:10–12, the “great matter” is defined as “that which is true” and “what is your

own." Jesus was referring not only to wealth, but also to a higher value. The term "that which is true" is unclear and very difficult to retranslate into Hebrew, and the phrase "what is your own" (16:12), is also somewhat enigmatic and usually interpreted to mean heavenly wealth. Consequently, the typical interpretation is:

The principle is then applied to worldly and heavenly wealth which are equated with small and great responsibilities.... Disciples will not be entrusted with heavenly wealth and responsibilities if they have not already shown themselves faithful over against worldly wealth. (I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 622)

Such an interpretation presupposes that the person "who will give you what is your own" is God himself. However, this interpretation of the parable's application does not correspond to the parable.

I suggest another interpretation, based on additional material from both Christian and Jewish sources: the one who will trust the followers of Jesus with wealth that is true and give them what is their own is not God but the outsider. Therefore Jesus' adherents are required to be open-minded to outsiders and trustworthy when having commercial contact with them. The true wealth which the disciples will receive in recompense is actually their own possession, namely the spiritual wealth they have received from Jesus and offer to others. This interpretation is in line with the spirit of the parable whose theme is economic contact between believers and non-believers.

Jesus was speaking about a community of wealth, but one very different from that of the Essenes. John the Baptist negated the Essene approach when he said, "He who has two tunics, let him share with him who has none; and he who has food, let him do the same" (Lk. 3:11). He gave the community of goods a wider meaning, extending it to the outside world. The new concept was linked with another idea: if one shares his material goods with others, then one also should share his spiritual wealth.

## Broader Approach

This complex of concepts appears in a passage from *The Two Ways*, the Jewish source of the *Didache*, or *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, a second-century Christian work: "You shall not turn away the needy, but shall share everything with your brother, and do not say that it is your own, for if you are sharers in the immortal, how much

more in the things which are mortal? For the Lord's will is that we give to all from the gifts we have received" (*Didache* 4:8).

Rabbi Akiva put it more succinctly in just three Hebrew words in the Mishnah tractate Avot 3:16: הכל נתון בקרבון (*ha-KOL na-TUN ba-e-ra-VON*, "everything is given in trust"). We find a similar idea in Philo:

You have nothing good of your own, and whatever you think you have, Another has provided.... Consider as a loan or trust what you have been given and return it to Him who entrusted and leased it to you.... For vast is the number of those who repudiate the sacred trusts and in their unmeasured greed use up what belongs to Another as though it was their own. But you, my friend, try with all your might, not merely to keep unharmed and unalloyed what you have taken, but also deem it worthy of all carefulness, that He who entrusted it to you may find nothing to blame in your guardianship of it. (*Who Is the Heir of Divine Things* 103-105)

These three passages are similar in spirit and content to Romans 15:26-27 and Luke 16:10-12. All five texts teach that the sharing in spiritual wealth obliges one to share material wealth as well.

Jesus' own practice reflected this more liberal approach to the world. He tended to accept invitations from outsiders, and his disciples were reproached because they ate and drank with tax collectors. In contrast to the separatism of the Essenes, Jesus instructed those whom he sent into the world to eat and drink what was provided for them, "for the laborer deserves his wages" (Lk. 10:7). In another passage this command is explained as follows: "You have received without paying, give without charging. Do not take any gold, silver or copper in your belts; take no bag for the journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals nor a staff; for the laborer deserves his food" (Mt. 10:8-10).

This is both like and unlike the Essene way of life:

On the arrival of any of the sect from elsewhere, all the resources of the community are put at their disposal, just as if they were their own; and they enter the houses of men whom they have never seen before as though they were their most intimate friends. Consequently, they carry nothing whatever with them

**If you have not proved trustworthy with unrighteous mammon, who will trust you with that which is true?**



**Part of the ancient building complex at Qumran. In the background, some of the caves in which the Essene library was hidden.**  
(Courtesy of the Israel Government Press Office)

on their journeys, except arms against brigands. In every city there is one of the order expressly appointed to attend to strangers, who provides them with raiment and other necessities.... There is no buying or selling among themselves, but each gives what he has to any in need and receives from him in exchange something useful to himself; they are, moreover, freely permitted to take anything from any of their brothers without making any return. (Josephus, *Jewish War* 2:124–125, 127, trans. Thackeray)

The difference between Jesus' disciples and the Essenes is apparent: the Essenes lived in an exclusive communism of wealth, and they took nothing with them when they traveled because an Essene stock supplied their needs wherever they went. Jesus and his disciples accepted the invitations of outsiders, and his emissaries ate and drank what their hosts provided. Like the Essenes, they did not take anything with them on their journeys. However, the community of goods received a new, broader meaning: a sharing of property with all, not only with the members of one's own sect.

## Open Exchange

The argument in Luke 16:10–12 takes place on two interlinked levels: economic and spiritual. Economic contact with the "wealth of unrighteousness" which belongs to outsiders will cause them to trust Jesus' disciples on the spiritual level. This will open their hearts to the true wealth which the disciples can then share. The true wealth is what belongs to the disciples,

namely the message they have received from Jesus. If outsiders accept that message, then they will return what the disciples own. If this exchange does not take place, the good news will be barren and Jesus' movement transformed into a separatist, closed sect like that of the Essenes.

In contrast to the Essenes' open disdain of non-believers, Jesus' followers were commanded to love their enemies and oppose the doctrinal secrecy practiced by the Essenes:

Nothing is concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. (Mt. 10:26–27)

Jesus' message was open to all. Abstaining from association with others would inevitably hinder his disciples from sharing their message of the Kingdom of Heaven. In Jesus' eyes, the refusal of the "sons of light" to deal with their own generation was even more foolish than the acts of the fraudulent sons of this world.

If this interpretation is correct, the message of the parable of the dishonest steward is not complete without Luke 16:10–12. The parable teaches that a clever person makes friends for himself via the wealth of unrighteousness, and the application encourages the open exchange of both material and spiritual wealth.

Before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, this parable was considerably more obscure. We could have guessed Jesus' reaction to the Essenes without knowing he was referring to them with the term "sons of light," but the discovery of the Scrolls enabled us to recognize Jesus' allusion and understand subtle nuances in the parable of the dishonest steward that would otherwise have been lost to us. Now we can see its probable meaning more clearly, and understand how it supports Jesus' teaching of love, not separatism and hatred, toward the unbelieving world. **JP**

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# Who Were the Essenes?

by David Pileggi

**T**he New Testament is one the best sources of information on the Second Temple period, and one of the most important groups of that era was the mysterious and monk-like Essenes. So it is especially curious that the New Testament never directly mentions the Essenes. Its failure to discuss the Essenes openly is even more curious in view of the fact that Josephus held them to be as significant as the Pharisees or the Sadducees.

## Origin

Philo of Alexandria estimates that only four thousand members belonged to one of the various branches of the sect. The majority lived on the western shore of the Dead Sea far removed from where Jesus conducted most of his ministry, but small groups of Essenes were also scattered throughout the Galilee and Judea, as well as in Jerusalem itself.

The origin of the Essenes is something of a mystery. It seems that they began to emerge during or soon after the reign of the Hasmonean monarch John Hyrcanus (135–104 B.C.). Along with the Pharisees, they may have developed from the Hasidim, a faction of pious Jewish sages that resisted the nationalist aspirations and what they saw as the apostasy of the Hasmonean kings.

The sect's name is even more difficult to determine, but many scholars are satisfied that the term "Essene" was derived from the Aramaic ܥܫܢܐ (*as-YAN*, healers). This may refer to a time when the sect practiced a form of medicine using herbs and incantations. In its writings the Qumran community referred to itself as the unity or togetherness — ܚܕܝܬܐ (*ha-YA-had*).

The first Essene mentioned by name was Judas the Essene (Josephus, *Jewish War* 1:78–80; *Antiquities* 13:311–313), who

lived in the time of Aristobolus I (104–103 B.C.), the immediate successor to John Hyrcanus. According to Prof. Flusser, this man may have been the founder of the sect, the "Teacher of Righteousness" mentioned in the Essenes' writings. He is thought to have been a priest who found himself in conflict with one of the Hasmonean rulers, possibly the priest-king Alexander Jannai (103–76 B.C.). The king, known in Essene literature as the "Wicked Priest," apparently persecuted the sect.

To escape royal oppression, the Teacher led his followers, many of whom were also priests, into the desert where they felt they could remain undefiled in an age of religious infidelity and await the coming of the messianic age. The sect considered itself the true Israel, and it attempted to create a model society in the wilderness separated from the "habitation of the wicked." Like John the Baptist, the Essenes

were aware that the way of the LORD was to be prepared in the desert as foretold by Isaiah (40:3).

## Lifestyle

The most striking aspect of the Essenes was their communal lifestyle. Their rules were spelled out in the "Manual of Discipline," a document found in the Qumran caves in 1947. The community shared meals together, owned no private property and depended on common stores of food and water. Asceticism was seen as an essential part of holiness, and they ate only the simplest food.

The Essenes lived in tents and caves along the shores of the Dead Sea, praying and working together in a common building. Most members worked as farmers, although others were shepherds and potters, and some were employed as scribes in order to preserve the Scriptures and the



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*View south from alongside the ridge in which Qumran Cave IV is located. (Courtesy of the Israel Government Press Office)*

writings of the sect. When not working, the Essenes dressed in unadorned white linen garments. Unlike other Jewish sects of the period, the Essenes did not own slaves: "There is no slave among them, but all are free, in as much as they work for one another" (Philo, *Every Good Man Is Free* 79). One out of every three nights was set aside for common prayer and study.

Breaking the rules of the sect would lead to a reduction of food rations or even excommunication. The sin of foolish talk, for example, resulted in expulsion from the community for three months, while those caught murmuring against the leaders were thrown out of the brotherhood for life. Permanent excommunication could mean death as most members took an oath to observe the sect's strict dietary laws. Rather than break their vows to God and consume what they considered to be unclean food, some disgraced Essenes were reduced to eating grass

and leaves. Needless to say, those trying to survive on such a diet eventually died of malnutrition.

Despite the communal nature of Essene society, it was far from egalitarian. Josephus speaks of four grades among the Essenes, and each member's rank was reviewed annually by a special committee, with promotions and demotions being determined by popular vote. In addition, they divided themselves into tribes, thousands, hundreds and tens as described in the book of Numbers. All members of the sect were supervised by overseers who controlled every aspect of life in the community. Much like a bishop in the early church, the overseer would provide religious guidance and instruction for those being initiated into the group. Overall direction for the sect was given by a fifteen-man council representing the twelve tribes of Israel and the three priestly families.

From ancient sources such as Josephus and Philo, it was believed until recently that the Essenes avoided marriage. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has present-

ed a much more complicated picture in regards to marriage. Evidence suggests that some factions at Qumran had families, and that although marriage was not rejected in principle, many in the sect believed that with the "messianic travail" just around the corner it was not a time for raising a family.

The Essenes rejected the legitimacy of the Temple cult. They felt that the priests were ritually impure and leading the people astray with deceitful teaching. As a result they refused to have anything to do with sacrifices in the Jerusalem Temple.

The sect saw itself as the remnant of the true and undefiled priesthood. They remained in a state of spiritual and ritual readiness, waiting patiently for the day when they would inherit their rightful place in Jerusalem. In that day two Messiahs — a prince from the house of David and a priest from the line of Aaron — would lead the community or "sons of light" against their opponents, the "sons of darkness," in the final battle to free the world from the clutches of Belial (Satan).

The Essenes isolated themselves from their fellow Jews in an even more fundamental way. Bitterly opposed to the lunar calendar, the Essenes used the solar-based calendar and celebrated the biblical feasts and holidays on different days than the rest of the Jewish people.

## Strict Observance

The Essenes carried on a bitter war of polemics with their rivals, the Pharisees. The Qumran sect deplored what they considered to be the laxity of the Pharisees, referring to them as the "givers of smooth interpretations," and denounced their participation in public life. For their part, the Essenes were well known for their strict observance of the Torah, in particular the commandments relating to all aspects of ritual purity. Members of the community daily used the *mikve* (ritual immersion bath), and were known to carry a small shovel with them in order to bury their excrement. The men of Qumran were just as strict in their adherence to the laws regarding the Sabbath. Philo, who admired the Essenes, wrote that members of the sect were respected for their integrity. He reported that the sect was motivated by three ideals: the love of God, the love of virtue and the love of man.

Such devotion to the Torah was no doubt  
(continued on page 15)



**The Thanksgiving Scroll, one of the original seven scrolls discovered at Qumran, as it looked at the beginning of its unrolling.**

(Courtesy of the Shrine of the Book, Israel Museum)

# Messianic Claims

## Lesson 24

by David Bivin

**A**lthough the concept of Messiah is important both in Judaism and Christianity, the Hebrew word מָשִׁיחַ (*ma-SHI-ah*) was not often used in Jesus' day. Jesus and his contemporaries rarely spoke of the Messiah by that name, but preferred to use other more oblique terms.

In the New Testament, *ma-SHI-ah* almost always appears in its Greek translation — χριστός (*christos*, anointed with oil; Christ). The Greek transliteration, μεσσίας (*messias*), appears only twice, in John 1:41 and 4:25.

Many Christians seem to think that "Christ" was Jesus' surname, while non-Christians often use it as a swear word. "Christ" is an English transliteration of a Greek translation of an original Hebrew word — a good example of the influence of Greek language and culture on our culture. It also is an example of the Church's loss of its Hebraic and Jewish roots.

Actually, "Christ" was understood very early as a personal name. As Walter Bauer points out in his *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, χριστός (*christos*) sounded to early Greek-speaking Christians very much like Χρηστός (*Chrēstos*, virtuous, excellent), a common secular Greek name. We find many instances in the New Testament of *christos* being used as a personal name (e.g., Mt. 1:1, Mk. 9:41, Acts 24:24, Rom. 6:3, I Cor. 2:2, Heb. 3:6).

Today, *ma-SHI-ah* is used as a personal name. It is a fairly common name in modern Israel, as one can see from the 1989/90 Jerusalem telephone directory which lists thirty-nine families with the name מָשִׁיחַ.

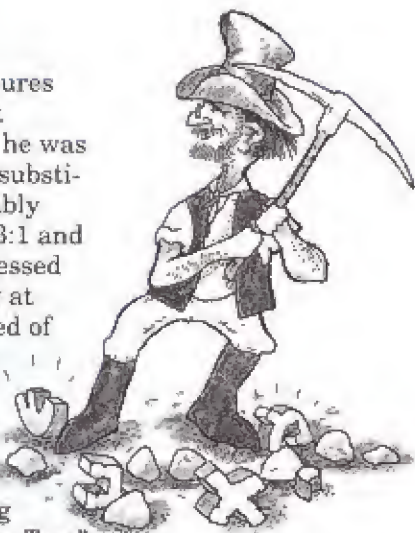
In the Jewish society of Jesus' day, one could certainly speak directly of the Messiah. Surprisingly, however, the term itself was used sparingly. One generally spoke of the Messiah by using substitutes drawn

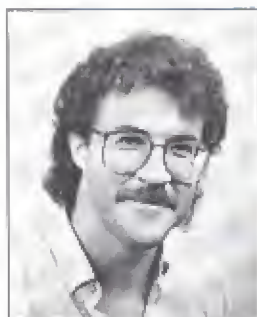
from passages in the Hebrew Scriptures that were interpreted messianically.

John the Baptist asked Jesus if he was the promised Messiah by using the substitute "Coming One" (Mt. 11:3), probably based on a combination of Malachi 3:1 and Zechariah 9:9. Jesus' disciples addressed him as "Lord" (Lk. 10:17) — hinting at Psalm 110:1 — a title Jesus also used of himself (Lk. 19:31). Jesus usually preferred "Son of Man," hinting at the supernatural figure portrayed in Daniel 7:13 (see "Jesus' Most Important Title," JP, March/April 1990). And he spoke of himself using other messianic titles such as "Green Tree" (Lk. 23:31), a reference to Ezekiel 20:47.

Others who claimed to be the Messiah of Israel likewise, in accordance with custom, made their claims by using substitutes for the implicit *ma-SHI-ah*. Bar-Kochba adopted the title נָשִׂיאֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (*ne-SP yis-ra-EL*, Prince of Israel). As Joseph A. Fitzmyer has noted, this title "is reminiscent of the eschatological leader of the people spoken of by the prophet Ezekiel, who was to be descended from David (see Ez. 34:24; 37:25; 44:3)" (*Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament*, 1974, p. 316). Since in Ezekiel 34:24 ("my servant David will be prince among them") and 37:25 ("David my servant will be their prince forever") it was understood that the LORD's servant David — itself a messianic reference — would be "prince," "prince" (נָשִׂיא, *nā-SP*) also was easily adopted as a messianic title.

This designation could be even more strongly equated with *ma-SHI-ah* because in both passages "prince" was associated with the messianic "one shepherd," and Ezekiel 37:24 states that "My servant David will be king over them." To Jesus' contemporaries, "king" was a strong messianic hint. As we pointed out in part one of this article, the English word "Messiah" is derived from an abbreviation of מֶלֶךְ מָשִׁיחַ (*ha-ME-lek ha-ma-SHI-ah*), "the King Messiah." JP





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***The Spiritual History of the Dead Sea Sect*** by David Flusser, translated from Hebrew by Carol Glucker. Tel Aviv: MOD Books, 1989. 97 pp., \$8.00.

by Stephen Schmidt

Many images flash across the mind when this sect of Jewish mystics is mentioned. Life in the desert, asceticism, harsh discipline, caves, scrolls and idealism seem inextricably associated with the Essenes. It is these images that Prof. David Flusser addresses, attempting to carry the reader back through the centuries to explore the life and thought of these fascinating men. His purpose is to paint a broader picture of the Essene sect so often neglected by the generally narrow focus of the scholarly world.

Based on a series of radio lectures, the book retains much of its original conversational tone and structure, but has been expanded to present a more detailed overview. Flusser opens with a general introduction to the Essenes and their origins, then describes their relationship to the Pharisees and Sadducees, the organization of the sect and aspects of its daily life. Only after this groundwork is laid are the various doctrines, beliefs and ideologies explored.

Flusser continually draws from a broad reservoir of ancient texts and recent scholarship, much of it his own, as he surveys the sect's beliefs of predestination, the "true Israel," the conflict between light and darkness, spirit and flesh, the Messiah and the Apocalypse.

As the author points out, examining the theologies of this sect often sheds light on the reader's own views of God and life. "If the reader finds Essene thought limited, perhaps he will discover that his own beliefs also have limitations and unsubstantiated assumptions, and that his own philosophy and expectations, like those of the Essenes, are also 'castles in the air'" (p. 8).

Like many sects, the Essenes regarded themselves as the Elect, having a monopoly on God. This brought the group into conflict with other currents in Judaism and fostered an insensitivity to the problems of the rest of the world. Furthermore, the Essenes had their own rules of behavior, as well as a sep-

arate halachah which they wished to impose on the whole House of Israel. The *Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness* describes this attitude, depicting the final paroxysm in which not only the Land of Israel is reclaimed according to God's will, but the entire world is conquered. These "Sons of Light" would personally usher in the divine kingdom and be the final inheritors of the earth. In this context Flusser laconically mentions that similar attitudes recur in modern history, with the tacit implication that some self-examination might be in order.

In the process of his examination, the author traces many Christian characteristics to Essene origins or influences. While the Essenes held rigidly to a belief in their ultimate vindication, they paradoxically tended towards pacifism. The evil of the day — whether religious or political — was not to be opposed with violence, and they preferred to leave it to God to redress injustice. To do otherwise would be to interfere with the divine plan, to resist the predestined order of things. This same view is apparent in the writings of the apostle Paul (cf. Romans 13:1-6), and Flusser credits the first six chapters of the early church document, *Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles (Didache)*, directly to the Qumranic *Community Rule*. In this way, he asserts that many beliefs held throughout the world, not just in Christian and Jewish circles, owe much to the ideology of the Essene community.

*The Spiritual History of the Dead Sea Sect* reads easily and is unencumbered with technical jargon. At the same time, its notes ensure that finer details, cross-references with other research and extensive quotations from the Essene scrolls, are not overlooked. While the book does not focus specifically on the Gospels, it is nonetheless a fascinating popular treatment of the beliefs, literature and men of the Essene community which were a vital part of the fabric of Jesus' world. JP

*The Spiritual History of the Dead Sea Sect* can be ordered directly from JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE for \$8 plus \$4 for airmail postage or \$2 by surface mail (allow 7-10 weeks for delivery by surface/sea mail). Checks should be made payable to "Jerusalem Perspective."

# Kefar Nahum

by Halvor Ronning

**J**esus' move from Nazareth to כפר נחום (*ke-FAR na-HUM*, the village of Nahum, Capernaum) was a tremendous change — from a little farm village hidden up in the hills, to a bustling lakeside fishing port.

Capernaum had much better agriculture than Nazareth. Not only was it warmer at 700 feet below sea level than 2000 feet higher up in Nazareth, there was fertile volcanic soil rather than the chalky rendzina soil of Nazareth.

Capernaum had two others factors in favor of its growth that were not present in Nazareth at all: fishing and trade. Its location on the main branch of the international trade route between Egypt to the southwest and Mesopotamia to the northeast was especially significant.

Once his public career began in earnest after the forty days of temptation in the wilderness, Jesus' fame grew rapidly. He could not live long in obscurity after moving to Capernaum because he was no longer in an out-of-the-way village, but on a much travelled trade route. He attracted so much attention that the houses of Capernaum, and very likely the synagogue itself, were not big enough for the crowds that gathered. Soon the hillsides of Capernaum became his outdoor auditorium.

## Healing the Paralytic

It happened in a house in Capernaum. There was not room for the crowd, and some friends who brought a paralytic couldn't get near to Jesus. So they went up on the roof, pulled it apart and lowered the man down to Jesus. When Jesus saw their faith he said to the invalid, "Your sins are forgiven you."



*Remains of the third-century A.D. synagogue at Capernaum. (Courtesy of the Israel Government Press Office)*

Why didn't he say, "I forgive you your sins" or "God forgives you your sins"? In Hebrew "Your sins are forgiven you" (נִסְלַחְךָ לָּךְ חַטֹּאתֶיךָ, *nis-le-HU le-KA ha-ta-<sup>o</sup>E-ha*) sounds even stranger than it does in English because the passive voice — "are forgiven" — is very rare in Hebrew. So rare, in fact, that Jesus' audience knew exactly where it came from and what it implied.

The passive form of the verb "to forgive" (נִסְלַח, *sa-LAH*) is found almost exclusively in Leviticus chapters 4–6. It is used in the context of instructions about how to make atonement when a sin has been committed unintentionally. The root סָלַח (*s-l-h*, "to forgive") is used in Hebrew Scripture only of God. When the biblical text uses the passive form in speaking of forgiveness for unintentional sin, it is describing what will take place once the prescribed atonement ritual has been carried out. There is no Scriptural precedent for anyone but God forgiving sin or declaring sin forgiven.

Therefore, when Jesus said "Your sins are forgiven you," he was saying something which even a priest did not say. He was speaking like God, and Jesus' listeners got quite a shock. The scribes and Pharisees understood exactly what he was implying, and they responded: "Who do you think you are? This is blasphemy! Only God can forgive sin."

Many of today's scholars maintain that Jesus really didn't know who he was, or at

*(continued on page 15)*

*Halvor Ronning, a 25-year resident of Israel, is a licensed Israeli tour guide. He is a member of the faculty and academic committee of the Institute of Holy Land Studies where he coordinates the M.A. program in Biblical History, and is a member of the Jerusalem School's Board of Directors.*



# A Forum For Your Views

**M**any JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE readers are as interested as the scholars of the Jerusalem School in the exploration of Jesus' biography. By becoming a member of the International Synoptic Society, you will be instrumental in helping us all to better understand the words of Jesus.

Membership dues promote the research of the Jerusalem School. The goals of the Society are to publish the School's research, especially the *Jerusalem Synoptic Commentary*; present technical research in a condensed and popularized form; and support new research into the synoptic Gospels.

Annual membership in the Society is: Regular – US\$100 (or equivalent in other currency); Fellow – US\$300; Sponsor – US\$500; Patron – US\$1000; Lifetime membership – US\$5000. A member who reaches a total of \$5000 in annual memberships automatically becomes a lifetime member.

Members of the Society receive a beautiful certificate of membership, and three times each year a Hebrew reconstruction and English translation of one of the stories in the conjectured biography of Jesus. Major publications of the Jerusalem School will be inscribed with the names of Society members, and all current members receive a free subscription to JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE.

Checks should be made payable to "Jerusalem School" and designated "ISS." Members in the United States can receive a tax-deductible receipt by sending their dues via the Jerusalem School's U.S. affiliates: Center for Judaic-Christian Studies, P.O. Box 293040, Dayton, OH 45429; or Centre for the Study of Biblical Research, P.O. Box 5922, Pasadena, CA 91117.

Readers also can be involved in the continuing research of the Jerusalem School by joining a local chapter of the International Synoptic Society. (ISS membership is not a requirement for attending ISS chapter meetings.)

Chapters serve as a forum for those interested in discovering more about the Hebraic background of the life and words of Jesus. Once or more each month chapter members meet to exchange views on current research presented in JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE. In addition, members form groups to learn biblical and modern Hebrew together, share study resources and pursue their own Gospel investigations.

For information about ISS chapters in your vicinity, please write to ISS Chapters, Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research, P.O. Box 31822, 91317 Jerusalem, Israel.

Each JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE includes discussion suggestions based on that issue's articles to serve as a guide for ISS chapter meetings.

## Suggested Discussion Questions:

1. What are the differences between Matthew, Mark and Luke in the story of Jesus' disciples plucking grain on the Sabbath? How would you explain them?
2. Why do you think the story of the disciples husking and eating grain on the Sabbath was preserved in the canonical Gospels? What does this suggest about our own Sabbath observance?
3. What does Jesus' view of the "sons of light" (the Essenes) suggest for us in modern society?
4. In *The Spiritual History of the Dead Sea Sect*, Prof. Flusser states that an elitist attitude such as the Essenes' separatism "fosters an insensitivity to the problems of the outside world." How could viewing oneself as the Elect make one insensitive to others? Could it sometimes make one sensitive to others?
5. How should one interpret such scriptural exhortations as "Come out from them and be separate" and "Be not conformed to this world"? How can they be reconciled with Jesus' injunction to "go into all the world," and his lifestyle of being "a friend of tax collectors and sinners"?
6. It is said of the early church in Jerusalem: "No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had.... There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need" (Acts 4:32, 34–35). This suggests the exclusive communism of wealth found among the Essenes. Jesus advocated a sharing of property with all, not only with the members of one's own sect. Does the organization of the early church conflict with Jesus' own teaching? JP

## Glossary

**halachah** — (הלכה, *ha-la-GAH*) the body of Jewish law, especially the legal part of rabbinic literature; the legal ruling on a particular issue.

**hasidic** — pertaining to the Hasidim (חסידים, *ha-si-DIM*, pious ones), a sect of pious sages who shared the Pharisees' ethical and religious values, but were also characterized by an extreme familiarity with God and their emphasis on deeds.

**Hasmoneans** — a family of Jewish priests who led a successful revolt which began in 168 B.C. against the Hellenized Selucid rulers in Syria. The Hasmoneans, nicknamed the Maccabees, ruled the Land of Israel from 142 to 63 B.C.

**Nisan** — (ניסן, *ni-SAN*) the first month of the ecclesiastical year in the Jewish calendar (Esther 3:7), roughly parallel to the month of April. The festival of Passover falls on the 15th to the 21st of Nisan.

**omer** — (אמר, 'O-mer, sheaf of grain) the sheaf of barley offered in the Temple as a wave offering on the second day of Passover, the day that marks the beginning of seven weeks

of counting; the fifty days counted from that day until Shavuot.

**Second Temple period** — literally the period from the rebuilding of the Temple about 530 B.C. to its destruction by the Romans in 70 A.D. The term usually refers to the latter part of this period, beginning with the Hasmonean Uprising in 167 B.C. and often extending to the end of the Bar-Kochba Revolt in 135 A.D.

**Shavuot** — (שבועות, *sha-vu-OT*, weeks) the annual festival of the firstfruits celebrated at the conclusion of the seven weeks of counting the omer (Lev. 23:15–21; Dt. 16:9–12); also known as Pentecost from the Greek πεντηκοστή (pentēkostē, fiftieth day).

**tannaic** (to-nā'ik) — pertaining to the Tannaim (טנאים, *ta-na-IM*), sages from the last third of the first century B.C. until approximately 230 A.D.

**Zealots** — a fanatical sect of Jewish extremists during the Great Revolt (66–73 A.D.) who urged a war to the death against the Roman occupiers of the Land, and ruthlessly persecuted Jews who held more moderate views.

## Transliteration Key

### Hebrew & Aramaic

#### Consonants

א — (silent)

ב — b

ו — v

ג — g

ד — d

ה — h

ו — v

ז — z

ח — h (voiceless

guttural)

ט — t

י — y (or silent)

כ — k

ך — k (like ch

in the Scottish

loch)

ל — l

מ — m

נ — n

ס — s

ע — c (voiced

guttural)

פ — p

ף — f

צ — ts (like ts

in nets)

ק — k

ר — r

ש — sh

ס — s

ת — t

\*The form of the

letter at the end

of a word.

#### Vowels

(The א is used

here as a point

of reference.)

א — a (like a in

father; rarely

like o in bone)

א, א — a (like a

in father)

א — e (like e in

net, or e in hey,

or somewhere in

between)

א, א — e (like e

in net)

א, א — i (like i in

ski)

א, א, א — o (like

o in bone)

א, א — u (like u

in flu)

א — e (silent, or

as short as e in

happening, or as

long as like e in

net)

#### Diphthongs

א — ai

א — oi

א — ui

#### Greek

Greek words are

transliterated

according to

the Society of

Biblical Litera-

ture system.



### Kefar Nahum

(continued from page 13)

least never claimed to be the person the early Church made him into. A student at a theological seminary once told me after a lecture, "You make it sound as if Jesus really said those things at those places. But all we have in the New Testament is second-generation — Greek-speaking, former pagan Christians who wrote what they **thought** Jesus said and did." Such students are the product of much current scholarly thought on Jesus. However, the story of Jesus forgiving the paralytic's sins belies that thinking.

It is hard to believe that early Greek-speaking disciples could cook up a story about Jesus which is full of Hebrew expressions and word order, and rabbinic-style allusion to rare scriptural usage. When the story is put back into the Hebrew from which it came, we see that in healing the paralytic Jesus also made a strong statement about himself that was clearly understood by those present. **P**

### Readers' Perspective

(continued from page 2)

sages can give the impression that the Hebrew gospel was a rather strange book, but we must be careful not to jump to conclusions. This same exercise could be carried out using any of the four canonical Gospels: pick out forty or fifty verses which are not found in the others and imagine that those verses constitute all we know about that Gospel. We could end up with a distorted picture.

The main point here is that the Gospel events were recorded in Hebrew at a very early period, and the attempt to get back to the very words which Jesus spoke is indeed a "good goal."

— Ray Pritz

*JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE welcomes the opinions of readers, and we will use this column to share as many of our readers' comments and questions as possible. JP reserves the right to edit all letters for length and clarity.*

**"I think it's the King James Version."**

### Who Were the Essenes?

(continued from page 10)

inspired by the community's theology. The Essenes believed that they were God's chosen people by divine election, and that they were the only ones to be given the Holy Spirit. Every man, according to the Essenes, was predestined to be a "son of light" or a "son of darkness." They were also convinced that God controlled the fate of men by the stars, and they watched the heavens to know God's will. According to Josephus they believed that all is preordained by God.

The "final war" for the Essenes came in 66 A.D. when the sect joined the Jewish revolt against the Roman yoke, many thinking that this was the apocalyptic battle they had long awaited. In the spring of 68, the Roman commander Vespasian marched his Tenth Legion into the Jordan Valley,

and soon afterwards the Essene community was destroyed and most of its members killed. Some Essenes managed to escape to Masada where they fought alongside the Zealots until the mountain fortress fell five years later.

The arrival of the Romans at Qumran must have come as a surprise, for the Essenes had little time to carry away their precious library and had to hide it in the nearby caves. Had the community survived, their manuscripts likely would have met the same fate as many another Hebrew manuscript, of which only Greek or Latin translations are now extant. The Essenes' tragedy almost two thousand years ago ironically provided us with a treasure of ancient documents that give us a fascinating look into the complex world of Judaism at the time when Jesus lived. **P**

**J**ERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE readers often ask, "Has a Hebrew gospel been found?" Although the church fathers testify that Matthew wrote the words of Jesus in Hebrew, not a single fragment of an early Hebrew manuscript containing Jesus' sayings has survived from the first centuries of the Christian era.

The entire text of Matthew's gospel is contained in *Even Bohan*, a fourteenth-century Hebrew work, and George Howard has recently published that text of Matthew. His work is an important contribution to the study of the Semitic background of the Gospels. However the title of his publication, *The Gospel of Matthew According to a Primitive Hebrew Text* (Mercer University Press, 1987), has again fueled rumors that an ancient Hebrew manuscript of the sayings of Jesus has been found. It seems to us that the text of Matthew found in *Even Bohan* is the translation of a fluent Hebrew writer of the medieval period, rather than a revision of an early Hebrew composition as Howard claims.

JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE dealt with the possible discovery of an ancient Hebrew gospel in its first issue. You can still obtain this and other back issues of JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE, and we encourage sub-

# Has a Hebrew Gospel Been Found?

scribers who do not have all the back issues to order now while they are still available.

Other outstanding articles from the first twenty issues are: "Did

Jesus Observe the Oral Torah?" (Jan 88), "How Long Was Jesus in the Tomb?" (May 88), "Was Jesus a Rabbi?" (Jun 88), "First-century Discipleship" (Oct 88), "Jesus' Education" (Nov 88), "Sources for the Gospels" (Jan 89), "How the Gospel Writers Worked" (Mar 89), and "Hebrew Reconstruction of the Lord's Prayer" (Mar 89).

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## The Jerusalem School

**T**he Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research (סכּן ירוּשָׁלַיִם לַחֲקֵר הָאֵוָנְגֵלִיּוֹנִים הַסִּינּוֹפִיִּים) is a consortium of Jewish and Christian scholars who are studying Jesus' sayings within the context of the language and culture in which he lived. Their work confirms that Jesus was a Jewish sage who taught in Hebrew and used uniquely rabbinic teaching methods.

The Jerusalem School scholars believe the first narrative of Jesus' life was written in Hebrew, and that it can be successfully recovered from the Greek texts of the synoptic Gospels. The School's central objective is to retrieve the original biography of Jesus. This is an attempt to recover a lost document from the Second Temple period, a Hebrew scroll which, like so much Jewish literature of

the period, has been preserved only in Greek.

As a means to its objective, the Jerusalem School is creating a detailed commentary on the synoptic Gospels which will reflect the renewed insight provided by the School's research. Current research of Jerusalem School members and others is presented in the pages of JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE, the School's popular voice.

The Jerusalem School was registered in Israel as a non-profit research institute in 1985. Its members are Prof. David Flusser, Dr. Robert L. Lindsey, Prof. Shmuel Safrai, David Bivin, Dr. Randall J. Buth, R. Steven Notley, Dwight A. Pryor, Halvor Ronning, Mirja Ronning, Chana Safrai and Dr. Bradford H. Young.

